3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

Pl. 4A is *Munuulun*, one of a group of artists from Yirrkalla, who produced many attractive bark paintings (Pl. 99A, 85E). He also carved the wooden figures of *Tjumbunul* (Pl. 130A, B), *Ahuntui* (Pl. 133A, B), and others. 53 [115]

Pl. 4C is *Kunuttun*, an old Kakadu aboriginal,[51] one of the last of the original inhabitants of Oenpelli. This man was a storehouse of aboriginal beliefs and mythological stories. Pl. 55D and Pl. 70B are his work.

Pl. 4D is an aboriginal, *Wulkini*, from the Liverpool River area. He was younger than many of the other artists in the group. He produced Pl. 72D, Pl. 73A, and many others.

Although these four men, each in his own locality, painted many attractive pictures, there were many others who were equally skilled. I did not meet an aboriginal who could not, or did not want to paint. There is certainly no special artist class. [463]

In watching these men and others at work, I was impressed by their sureness. They seemed to have a fully conceived picture in their mind before they started to paint; it was seldom that an artist altered a design or corrected a brush stroke.

Although, for the sake of simplicity, I have referred to the designs on bark as paintings it is evident, in a narrower interpretation, that some are paintings, i.e. painting in spaces, and others are brush drawings, that is, the designs are built up by a series of lines. There are also numerous examples in which the figures are first painted and, when dry, details are added in fine lines.

51. This tribe, now almost extinct, was visited by Spencer in 1912.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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in weaving and spinning by hand, and employ a simple spindle for the manufacture of string from opossum fur and human hair. They are skilled as wood carvers and make elaborately-barbed spear heads of wood, carved sacred totemic objects, and grave posts, as well as wooden dugout canoes. They also possess some skill in the working of metal, and make fine iron spear heads by beating out, cold, such unpromising material as odds and ends of scrap metal, rigging screws from ships, heavy metal drums, and even water pipes. In many of these processes the possession of special skill is recognised by the use of a distinctive name, and in their technology there is evidence of the beginning of craft specialisation.

Some account of the social organisation of the natives of Arnhem Land will be necessary in order to understand the economic organisation, food gathering and food preparation, and particularly the division of labour and the distribution of food.

The people of Eastern Arnhem Land are organised on a basis of localised totemic clans with patrilineal descent. The bond between members of a clan is descent, or belief in descent, from a common ancestor. Just as the individuals within each clan are believed to be related, so the clans themselves are considered to be linked to one another by the bonds of kinship which once existed among the clan ancestors or culture heroes who were the founders of the clans, thereby establishing a permanent relationship between the groups containing their kin which are believed to be descended from them.

In at least one respect the social organisation of Arnhem Land, east of Cape Stewart, is atypical. The definite tribal organisation which is a characteristic feature of most other

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ceremonial exchange system. Besides weapons and fishing lines, the heavier types of rope as well as most of the larger fishing nets, are made by men. In the coastal groups where bark canoes are used, the making of these craft is also the work of the men. In the case of dugout canoes, a man either makes his own canoe, a long and laborious task taking weeks or months of time and requiring a good deal of intensive hard work, or he employs a craftsman to make it for him, in which case he assumes the responsibility for the organisation of the work and for the payments involved. The large, coarsely woven fish traps, which may be five or six feet, or even more, in length, as well as other paraphernalia associated with fishing, are usually made by the men, although women may also assist.

How subtle may be the driving force which induces the natives to work, is shown by the following example. During the south-east or dry season the people rarely build houses, but are content with breakwinds, until the north-west or wet season. Even then they generally delay the work of gathering bark and other necessary building materials until the actual onset of the rains. During a patrol at the beginning of the north-west when we were debating as to whether a heavy storm that threatened was really about to break, one of the natives said "*ŋärra tobitj*",[13] "my muscles have twitched", (and therefore it will not rain). And such is the belief of the natives in these portents that the people would not go out and collect the necessary paperbark to make a proper camp, despite the threatening sky.

[13] Muscular twitching, called *tobitj*, is an omen or portent which is believed to give warning of a forthcoming event, or to foretell the approach of an enemy or a visitor. The part of the body in which the twitching occurs indicates the relationship in which the visitor stands to the person who receives the warning.

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427 sionally, when men were short, they helped to make up the
648 crews of canoes which operated as tenders from the praus in diving for trepang.

177 Today the word *mälli*, with this idea of "payment", is
192 used principally in connection with the manufacture of
437 wooden dugout canoes, and these form part of the culture
501 complex that was left as a legacy by the Indonesian visitors,
773 a fact which is stressed in mythology.[38]

431 A glance at the various types of transactions listed above,
437 in which property, or *gerri*, changes hands, and in which the natives' own terms and classification have been used, brings out the fact that in all but one the social or ceremonial aspect rather than the hard material or "commercial", the strictly economic, is stressed, and that in only one is the idea of direct *payment* or recompense, paramount. This is in the manufacture of the wooden dugout canoe, *lippa lippa*, which, as will be seen in section 4, is the work of special craftsmen. Apart from receiving it as a gift, there are two principal ways of obtaining a canoe. The first is by employing a craftsman to cut it, the second, called "*täkkul ḳoŋ gurrupän*", lit. "axe hand give", is to pay the craftsman by presenting him with a steel axe, which, after he has used it to cut the canoe, becomes his own property.

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[38] There is some tendency to assume that these wooden canoes were once manufactured with stone axes. Actually proof is not lacking of the fact that the *lippa lippa* (wooden dugout canoe) was part of the culture complex introduced by the visitors from Indonesia and that these canoes were never made in Australia until after the introduction of the iron axe. (This, however, does not apply to the seagoing dugout outrigger canoes of Eastern Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, which were made with native shell adzes, but which had a separate origin.)

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4.

CRAFT SPECIALISATION

463 In most parts of Australia, the material culture is relatively simple, and each individual makes for himself most of the weapons and implements that he uses in his daily life. This is generally the case in Arnhem Land, and a man makes his own spears, spear-throwers, and most of the other equipment that he needs for hunting and fighting. But frequently he admires the handiwork of others who show special skill in technique. This is particularly the case with spears, in which it is of some importance to a man to believe that his weapons are superior or that they have some special quality. He often acquires spears from relatives in the particular quarter within the exchange cycle which may be renowned for such weapons, giving in exchange, spears which he himself has made and which may have special merit in the eyes of people in the territories through which they pass.[28]

(431)

411 [28] The distribution and the use of various types of spears is not as simple as might at first appear. Both in Arnhem Land and on Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, the serrated spines of the stingray are used for the tipping of spears. On Cape York Peninsula these nails or spines are regarded merely as material for the tipping or barbing of fighting weapons and may be used by anyone. But in Eastern Arnhem Land stingray spines are associated in mythology with *Bulmändji* (Tiger Shark), a culture hero of certain clans claiming *Bulmändji* as a clan ancestor, and the right

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Not every man is skilled in weaving *bäti* (baskets), of which many types are recognised, each with its own name and each made for a specific purpose. A man with special skill in weaving becomes known, but he is called merely *koŋ mainmäk*, a "good hand". Such a man may acquire some local renown and receive substantial payments (*baka bäkmärämma*) in return for his work, but again, this is a tribute to, and an acknowledgement of, the *marr* of the master craftsman, the prestige he brings, rather than "payment" for his activities, his craftsmanship. But it shows the beginnings of the recognition of craft specialisation, the *virtu* of special skill in craftsmanship.

But in the case of the *lippa lippa*, the wooden dugout canoes, which may exceed 24 feet in length and may be capable of carrying upwards of six to eight men on sailing

to use these stingray spines is the prerogative of these clans only and is jealously guarded.

Again, the fine appearance and balance of a spear is not always a gauge of its worth. I once remarked to an informant, Raiwälla, of a spear shaft, that it was crooked and twisted, and the spear not of much value. But he corrected me quickly and pointed out that as the shaft was crooked the spear was not "flash" and was therefore more likely to fly straight to its mark. Such a remark is enlightening, because it stresses at once the great difference in the way in which the white man and the Arnhemlander look at even so simple an artefact as a spear. To the white man, a wooden shaft is of good or indifferent craftsmanship, but the native attributes personality to it. Its very appearance may be deceptive. It may possess *marr* from its background and association. For this reason a native may place great value upon spears received within the ceremonial exchange cycle, from areas renowned for weapons of a certain type, although to the eye of the white man they may appear to be inferior to those which he makes for himself. The native recognises the prestige (the *marr*) of the master craftsman. By their associations certain *gerri* possess *marr*, and they have therefore a vastly enhanced *psychological* value as fighting or hunting weapons.

it must be remembered that the *lippa lippa* and the iron tools for cutting them were part of the pattern of Indonesian culture adopted by these people from the Macassar voyagers.

In the case of the bark canoe, while a good deal of skill and experience was needed in making the craft, the actual time involved amounted to a few hours only. A man was generally assisted in stripping the sheet of stringybark,[80] and in the heating and folding of this, by his wife or other near kin, and no special organisation was necessary to feed him, or to relieve him of the need to hunt, over a period of weeks. But with the building of a big sea-going dugout canoe the matter is different and a considerable amount of organisation is necessary to build and launch the craft.

Today there are three principal means of obtaining *lippa lippa*. The first is as a gift of the kind called *tadoit* (pages 40-41), to send back the *marr* after a *ŋarra* or other ceremony, a means, however, which is uncertain because it cannot be solicited. Of the other and more direct methods of obtaining canoes, *ŋikkŭl koŋ gurrupän*, (p. 52) is probably the most favoured, while straight-out purchase (*maŋi*) (pp. 51-52), in which the *djalimulimo* or *djärtunmirri* is directly engaged to carry out the work, is used less frequently. My informants said that the *djalimulimo* feeds himself during the progress of the work. This means that he must either spend a considerable part of his time in hunting or fishing or that he must depend upon his wives or other female kin to feed him in the period during which he is actually cutting the canoe. More rarely, responsibility for feed-

[80] Although most of these bark canoes, even those which are about 14 or 15 feet in length, are constructed from a single sheet of bark, some, especially in the Gulf of Carpentaria, are made from two or more sheets sewn together.

114 177 ture of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land showed a resistance to the influence of this virile culture from Indonesia, and certainly none for the statement that the ideas of these people were "no different from what they were before he (the Malay seafarer) arrived . . ."

121 177 I do not propose here to attempt a full review of the influence of the Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people, but merely to show its effect on the ceremonial exchange cycle and the economic system which accompanies it.

177 192 431 439 That this influence was extensive is proved beyond question by the fact (see pp. 67, 68f) that the term *muadäk*, which gives its name to *kumur muadäk*, the northern sector of the exchange cycle, is the collective or generic name given by the natives to all the *gerri* which they obtained formerly from the Macassar visitors, of which the chief items are knives, axes of the type called *luŋa linya*, nails (for fish hooks etc.), fish hooks and lines, bottle glass (for scrapers), tobacco, smoking pipes (*pämatukka*), belts, wooden dugout canoes, (*lippa lippa*), beads, (*männi-männi*), and material such as calico, blankets, string and later, wool, to which the collective term *mäthäkäl* was applied.

114 324 135 431 463 When Professor Warner contrasts the ease with which an Arnhem Land native acquired an iron axe from the Malays, with the labour involved in the making of the (admittedly) much less efficient and satisfactory stone axe, he overlooks certain important factors. First, that stone axes, like flint spear heads, are made from special stone which occurs only in restricted areas, and that while any man who merely uses an axe to get wild honey, can grind the edge, the implement itself is usually made initially by a craftsman, a specialist in the working of the stone who lives in the country in which it occurs, and like the smooth hard

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pounding stones called *poipuro* (page 71) it is exported as *gerri* within the ceremonial exchange system.

It is part of my thesis to show that an important function served by the ceremonial exchange cycle is in supplying this incentive, this motive for fine craftsmanship, the anticipation of the ritual and pageantry, by adding romance or "glamour" to work which would otherwise be drudgery. A man does not as a rule set out to manufacture a stone axe as he may a fish spear or a hunting spear, to satisfy an immediate need. Such an implement requires hours, even days, of grinding and polishing after the preliminary rough shaping of the hard stone. But, as it has been pointed out, these axes are made by a craftsman who probably learned the craft from his father and are accumulated as *gerri* which will be presented on some future ceremonial occasion to "pay back" a present that the maker has received from one of his exchange partners, or they are used to create an obligation which his partner will later discharge.

The stone quarry at ŋillipidji where *ŋämbi lirra* are made, covers acres of ground, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of spear heads come from the quarry in the course of a year. Like the stone axe heads, these flint heads are not made for immediate use, but are passed from Wagilläk territory—in bundles of a dozen or so, each wrapped neatly in the paperbark sheath called *djalk*—to reciprocate ceremonial presents of *muadäk*, or to build up goodwill and prestige. Big bundles are sent north and north-west, in the knowledge that they will be reciprocated ultimately with other *gerri* of a traditional kind and of at least equivalent value.

From the orientation of a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the Glyde River, the people to the north who occupy the territory along the northern shoreline, at Glyde Inlet, and Banyan